

LONE WOLF AND CUB

子連水狼

VOLUME 26

STRUGGLE IN
THE DARK

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA



子連水狼

LONE WOLF AND CUB



story
KAZUO KOIKE
art
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STRUGGLE IN THE DARK

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA

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狼



VOLUME

26

A NOTE TO READERS

Lone Wolf and Cub is famous for its carefully researched re-creation of Edo-Period Japan. To preserve the flavor of the work, we have chosen to retain many Edo-Period terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Japanese is written in a mix of Chinese ideograms and a syllabic writing system, resulting in numerous synonyms. In the glossary, you may encounter words with multiple meanings. These are words written with Chinese ideograms that are pronounced the same but carry different meanings. A Japanese reader seeing the different ideograms would know instantly which meaning it is, but these synonyms can cause confusion when Japanese is spelled out in our alphabet. *O-yurushi o* (please forgive us)!

LONE WOLF AND CUB



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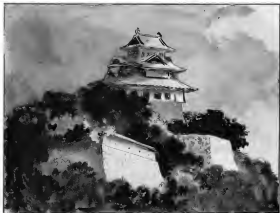
*the hundred and
twenty-eighth*

Tales of the Grass: Nindō Ukon

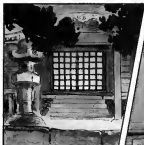
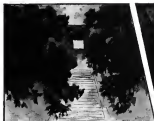
KUMATA, HERE, STRETCHING FROM
MOUNT AKARI THROUGH OZE AND
TOKURA TO THE BORDERS OF AIZU
ON THE WEST, SHINSHU ON THE
NORTH, Echigo AND THE MOUNTAIN
WALL OF JOETSU. A NATURAL
FORTRESS AT THE CONFLUENCE OF
THE TONE AND KATASHIMA RIVERS,
KUMATA WAS THE CORNERSTONE
OF NORTHERN KÖZING.



MUMATA, 4944'
LORD TOHI
YAMASHIRO-MO-KAMI
SADAMUNE THIRTY-FIVE
THOUSAND KOKU

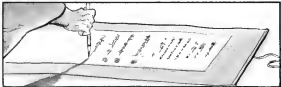














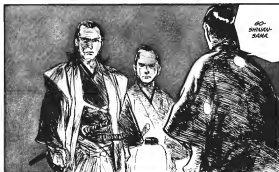




















THEY
GAVE THIS
TO YOUR

YES,
SIR



ARMED,
WAS IT?

YES- HE'S AN
ASHIGARU, SIR, BUT
THE YOUNG MEN SEEM
TO TRUST HIM.



THEY
MUST, TO
GIVE HIM
THIS.

SO WHY WOULD
SUCH A TRUSTED
MAN GIVE OUT HIS
FRIENDSHIP



BETRAYAL
A SAMURAI'S
GREATEST
SHAME...



BUT DISLOYALTY IS
WORSE THAN BETRAYAL.
BETRAYED FIDELITY
DESERVES A THOUSAND
DEATHS.

I TRIED
TO SHOW THEM
IT WAS DISLOYAL TO
ATTACK OUR LORD'S
GO-KUARD...









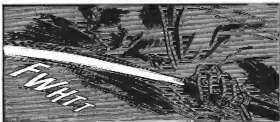


FATHER!





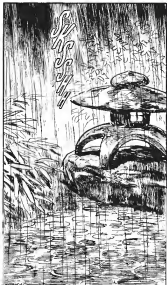
















IT FINISHED
YOSHIDA
SHOULD I'VE
PLED THE AMM
NADO UKON

吉田主膳を謀殺し
脱藩すもつ也
忍び石近



I DON'T
HATE YOU,
DIE.



I AM
TO DO IT
EVERYTIME.

MY
APOLO-
GIES.







*PATHEtic FOOLs!
REFORM IS IT? KILL
THE DO-HARDY!*



MONSTERS!

*YOU'RE WORST OF
ALL... BETRAYING OUR
LORD AS YOSHIDA'S
LAP DOG!*



*YOU STILL
RESIST? THEN...
NO MERCY!*

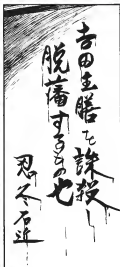






























ANALDO UNCOMF
YOU'RE HIDEYU
KESAU!



I'D HEARD
RUMORS...

ANALDO
WAITING FOR
HIDEYU FOR
GENERATIONS



AND
IT EXPLAINS
EVERYTHING
YOU'VE DONE!



I'M
NUMATA'S
SHOGUN! I
TRAINED
YOU!

I KNOW YOUR SWORDWORK—
CLIMBY! AMATEURISH! YET
YOU KILLED THE GO-HARD
WITH A SINGLE, FLAWLESS
STROKE!



WHY GENERAL
SKILL LIKE THAT? IT
WOULDN'T HAVE SURVIVED
AND NOT EVEN, RIDING
IT FROM YOUR
TEACHER!



I LIVE
BY THE
SWORD...

...AND YET,
TO MY SHAME,
I COULDN'T
TELL!



YOU GOT COZY WITH
THE REFORMERS TO GET
YOUR HANDS ON THEIR BLOOD?
PLEASE, YOU WANTED TO
BETRAY THEM, BUT
WHY?

FOR A
PROMOTION? A HERE
ASHIMURA COULDN'T
STEAL ANY SECRETS
FOR YOUR VASSAL
MASTERS.

IN FACT...
MAYBE YOU
STARTED THE
REFORM MOVEMENT
YOURSELF? BUT
NOW YOU'VE GOT
TO LEAVE, FOR
SOME REASON...

... SO YOU PULL A
FAST ONE, YOU KILL
THE BIG-BOSS LIKE YOU'D
MEANT TO ALL ALONG!
THAT WAY...

...IT'S
ANYTIME
TO RUN!

I THOUGHT IT
THROUGH ON THE WAY
EVERYTHING
FITS!

I FIGURED A
MURDER WOULD
ESCAPE OVER
NORRUD.





THE
RAIN HAD
STOPPED...



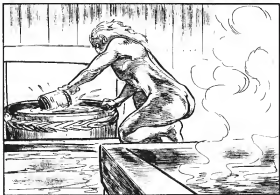


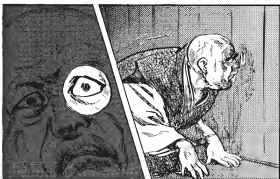
*the hundred and
twenty-ninth*

Struggle in the Dark



























THAT CAN'T
BE! THERE
HAD TO BE
SOMETHING!

IT'S THERE,
DAMN IT! OTHERWISE
HE'D BE DEAD AND
BURNED BY NOW...



HE'D HAVE
GROWNED...



INSTEAD, HE'S...
PULPITING!



NOT
RED-LINE
OVER...

NOT
CRANKING...

MUSCLES
SUPPLING,
EYES
BURNING...



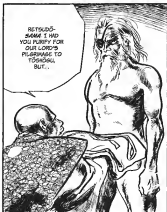
HOW THE
DEVIL...

HOW THE
DEVIL...??









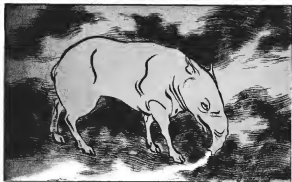
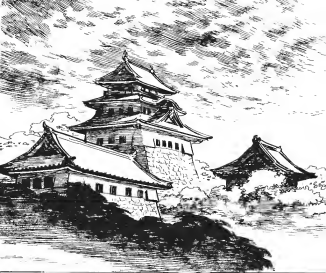




AREN'T YOU
STARVING? YOU
DON'T EAT OR
DRINK—

I AM SAVING
MY APPETITE,
NEED TO DRINK YOUR
BLOOD AND GRAB
YOUR BONES!







TAKOCHI!

MY LORD!



YOU SAID YOU
KNEW WHERE *OSAMU*
ITTO IS. BUT YOU'VE
DONE NOTHING!
WHY NOT??

THE *ASHO*
SHIRO SAYS
ITTO IS LIVING
ON THE HATCHO
STRAND!



HE'S
EVEN BUILT
A HUT, BY
GOD!

MY LORD,
I...



BRING HIM ALONG!
IT WAS YOUR IDEA
TO HAVE HIM FACE
RETSUOKU!



FORGIVE
ME...



AS MY LORD KNOWS
WELL, DEARE ITTÔ IS A
SUICIDE MASTER, AS
STRONG AS YASUO-
SAMAI



IF I TRY
TO BRING HIM
BY FORCE...

...I FEAR
THERE COULD
BE COUNTLESS
DEATHS, TERRIBLE
INJURIES...



HE'S A WANTED ASSASSIN, FEARED
THROUGHOUT THE LAND, MY LORD. HE'D RESIST TO
THE DEATH, AS HE HAS ALWAYS DONE. INSTEAD...
I'VE DEvised A WAY TO GET HIM HERE WITHOUT
BLOODSHED, AND AM JUST ABOUT TO
IMPLEMENT IT.



PLEASE, MY LORD
JUST A LITTLE
LONGER...



IT'S...
AFTER HIM

NOT A MOMENT
TO LOSE. WHATEVER
IT TAKES...



KILL THE
BEAST!

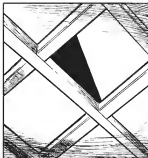


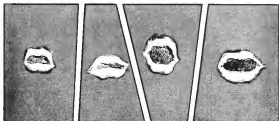
COULDN'T STRIKE
HIM, SO IT'S BACK TO
MY TRUSTY POISON
TOMORROW...



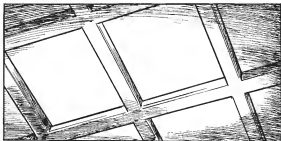






















HOE
HOE
HOE...

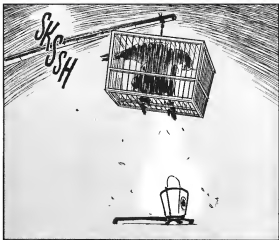


HA HA
HA!

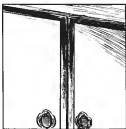






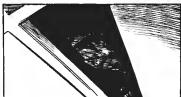


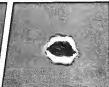




KILL HIM IN
ONE BANGING THROU
MAKE IT LOOK LIKE
HE CUT HIS OWN
STOMACH.

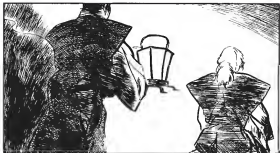
THAT'S
HOW YOU KILL
A MONSTER!

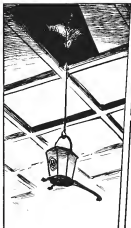


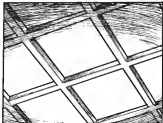
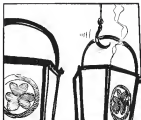






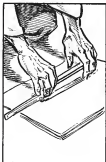




























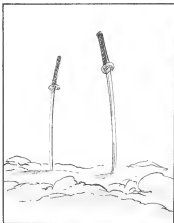


*the hundred and
thirtieth*

Song of the Spirit











LOOKS
LIKE HE'S
HEADING
OUT.



YOU
TWO TAIL
HIM.

AND
DON'T
LOSE
HIM

RIGHT,
BOSS.

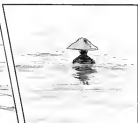
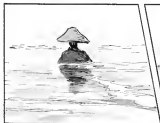


HE'S
GONE.















THE SANKU SHRINE
FESTIVAL, BY OTHER
NAMES, THE TENKA
MATSURI! THIS
ELABORATE EVENT
CLIMAXED ON THE
FIFTEENTH OF
THE MONTH.

THE *ANCHI-BURUO*
CONVEYED THE WILL
OF THE *RYOBU* TO
THE THREE *ANCHI-
DOHRYOBU*.



THE *ANCHI-DOHRYOBU* RAN
EDO'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT
IF THE *ANCHI-BURUO* WAS
MODERN TOKYO'S GOVERNOR,
THEN THESE THREE MEN
WERE HIS HAND GRIPS.

DESCENDED FROM COMMONERS
WHO FOLLOWED THE REVERED
FIRST *SHOGUN* TOKUGAWA
IYASU FROM MIKAWA TO EDO,
THEY ENJOYED THE HEREDITARY
RIGHT TO USE A FAMILY NAME,
BEAR SWORDS, AND WEAR THE
NOBILITY ROBES OF THE
SAMURAI.





THE SHIMIZU FAMILY WAS
PART OF THE SAKAGI SHREWS'
FLOCK. AND THIS, THIS FESTIVAL
PROCESSION ALONG WARD
ALLOWED INTO EDO
CASTLE.



SEEKING
TO ENTER
THE CASTLE
WITH IT...

...ZAMPA ITTÔ
STRODE TOWARD
THE HOME OF
TAKIYA TOSAMON



...THE ANCHO-
POINTEYER
RUNNING EDO'S
GREATEST
FESTIVAL.





HERE ARE
THE DETAILS OF
THE *AMATEBAY*

IT'S THE
SAME DATE AS
ALWAYS.



WE ENTER
YAMASHITA
GATE AT DAWN
TRANSIT SAKURADA
AND CLIMB THE
KURODA ESTATE
INCLINE

AT THE
SUNAKO BRIDGE
WE TURN DOWN
INTO KASATA-CHO
ENTERING THE
INNER GROUNDS
AT KAKUO
GATE



TAKI
TAKESASHI
SAYS TO
OTEMAS ...

AND LEAVE
THE CASTLE FOR
USUAL VIA JOEBO
BRIDGE









R-ROGHERMAN...?
DON'T THAT MEAN...

I-I LOVE
WOLF AND
GIB...?



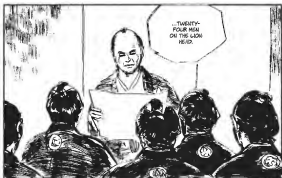
EDD AND
CHAMMO.

NOW THAT
WAS STRUCK
TERRIBLE.



AND AS ITTÔ AGAIN TROD THE
SOIL OF THE CAPITAL, PUSHING
DEEP INTO ENEMY TERRITORY,
THE WHEELS OF NARAH ONCE
MORE BEGAN TO TURN...

















I WOULD
ASK FOR A
FAVOR, SIR



DURING
THE GREAT
FLOOD, SOMEONE
BLEW UP SUMIYOSHI
HILL TO BLOCK
THE SHIMAZU
RIVER



THAT SAINT
SAID EDO FROM
DISASTER.



AO AMON-
DOSHIOKI!
I THANK
YOU.





WHAT
MANNER OF
MAN...?

TO ME,
WHO PULLED
MAGASAKIYA FROM
THE FLOOD? WHO
HEARD EVERY-
THING...



IF I OFFER
HELP, HE'LL
REFUSE...



AND
THEN, TO COME
AND APOLOGIZE...
IN CASE HIS
PRESENCE CAUSES
TROUBLE...



JUST FOR
THAT... KNOWING
I COULD BETRAY
HIS SECRET...

IF THERE
WERE ANY LIKE HIM
AMONG THE *Q-BROOD*,
WE COULD HAUNT THE
ANTHONY...



SHAM-SHAM
WANTING YOUR
SOUL...

...IN THE
GAME OF ALL
EDOs...



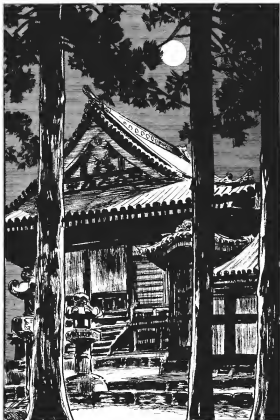
...I THANK
YOU FROM OUR
HEARTS



STILL...
EVEN DURING
THE CONFUSION
OF THE
FESTIVAL...

...HOW CAN
HE GET IS
THERE ALONE,
UNNOTICED?











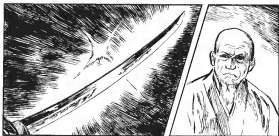


YOUR
PREDECESSOR
GRACIOUSLY ALLOWED
ME TO RECLAIM THEM AT
WILL. BUT HE PASSED
AWAY LAST YEAR. DO
YOU AGREE...?

WHAT'S
YOURS IS
YOURS.

BUT
FIRST, SOME
PROOF







STORY! I SEE
IT! SUCH BEAUTY! SUCH
PERFECTION! SWORD
AND MAN! NO ONE!



TOTAL
FREEDOM!



REMARKABLE
FOUR YEARS IN
THE EARTH, AND NO
RUST. PRESERVED
WITH A WARRIOR'S
HEART.



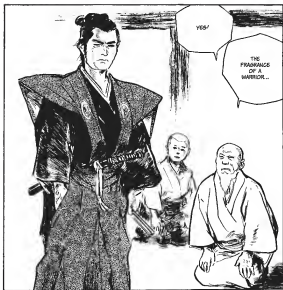
THE
SCENT OF
A BURN...

WHEN DID
I SMELL IT
LAST?





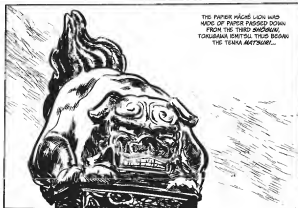
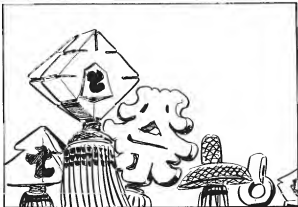


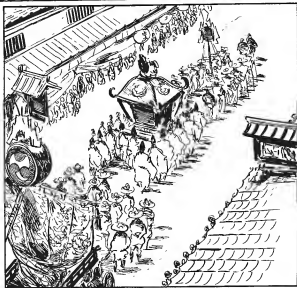
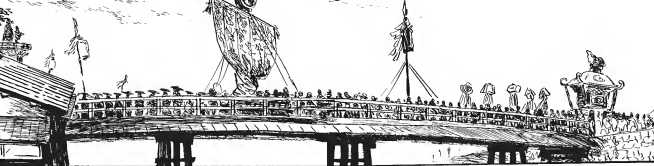


SUCH A REFRESHING NIGHT. COME AND ADMIRE THE MOON.

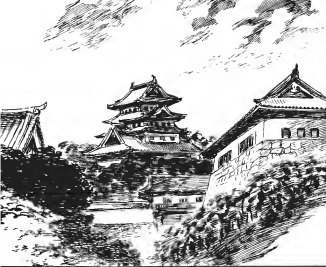
AND
TOMORROW...
THE AMT



















WHAT
MANNER OF
MAN...??





Can
you
see
it?



Can
you
see
it?











*the hundred and
thirty-first*

Great Reversals







...REGLESS OF OUR
LORD'S SACRED PHRASE,
YOU ALLOWED A KITCHEN
FIRE TO CORRUPT THE PURITY
OF THE CASTLE.



FOR
THIS OUTRAGE,
AMAROSHIMONY
DRUGO WILL
ENFORCE...



...SHEPPARD.



SO SWEET
OUR LORD



W-WAIT!
I CAN...
THERE'S...



...THERE'S
A LONG,
LONG STORY
BEHIND THIS!













TEAR
WHAT YOU DID
TO ME?

BUT DID
I ~~WARRP~~ DID
I ~~BURN~~ ~~ONCE~~
EXPLODE IN
ANGER?



THIS IS
THE HEART OF
A SHAMOSH.
ACT LIKE ONE...
IN DEATH.



RAGE
AT HEAVEN,
PAY THE PRICE
AND ~~THE~~ ~~THE~~

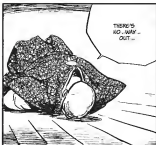


I'LL LIGHT
INCENSE
FOR YOU.



...AS WE'RE
SUCH OLD
FRIENDS.















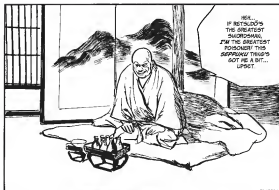












HEH...
IF RETSUDO'S
THE GREATEST
SACRILEGIOUS,
I'M THE GREATEST
POISONER! THIS
SUPPORTING THING'S
GOT ME A BIT...
UPSET.



BUT THE AGEE
I GUT THIS
BELLY OF MINE!
NOT FOR YOUR
AMUSEMENT,
RETSUDO!

I'LL
DRINK
MY OWN
POISON,
BY GOD!



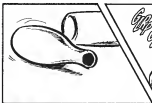
WIFE
TO THE
TURN-TEMP
TOO
SCARY!



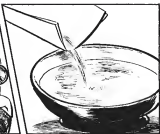
BUT
POISONING
NOTHING
TO IT!













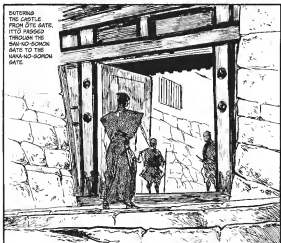








ENTERING
THE CASTLE
FROM ÔTE GATE,
ITTO PASSED
THROUGH THE
SAM-NO-SOMON
GATE TO THE
NARA-NO-SOMON
GATE.













I CAN UNDERSTAND
OUR LORD WANTING TO
END THAT FELD. FOUR
YEARS OF IT

AND THEY SAY
YASU-SAMPA'S BEEN
TREATING THE ROYALTY
LIKE DIRT...



SHAM-BOHO
MAY BE DOWN AND
OUT...BUT THEY STILL
ANGRY HIM.

HE DID
ASK ABOUT
YASU-SAMPA...



MY I SAID
ASH-BOHO'S
QUARTERS!

BUT
ASH-BOHO
DIED TONIGHT
YASU-SAMPA'S WITH
THE ROYALTY
NOW

IT'S OKAY
THEY'LL SET HIM
STRAIGHT.



SHAM
BE SOME
FIREWORKS
TONIGHT...

YOU BETT
THE ANGRY WOLF
CARVES THE OLD
TIGER...

... WHILE
KAI TAKES
IT TO THE
JURY?

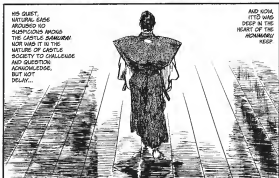


AS A STREAM
FLOWS FROM HIGH
LAND TO LOW,
SO ŌSAMU ITTŌ
MOVED THROUGH
THE CASTLE
LIKE WATER.



HIS QUIET,
NATURAL EASE
AROUSING NO
SUSPICIONS AMONG
THE CASTLE SAMURAI
NOR WAS IT IN THE
NATURE OF CASTLE
SOCIETY TO CHALLENGE
AND QUESTION
ACKNOWLEDGE,
BUT NOT
DELAY...

AND NOW,
ITTŌ WAS
DEEP IN THE
HEART OF THE
ACCOMMODY
KEEP.













ARE YOU
A DREAM...
TOOT?



ARE
TAMOSHI BOMBS,
WAS IT NOT?
I HAVE A
QUESTION
FOR YOU.

....
....



WHERE
IS YAMU?
RETSUDOP?



NOO...
GAGHI!







SO I'VE
GOT TO DO...
SEPPUKU...



BUT...
~~EXTENDING~~
GOT THE
FIRM

TO
DESTROY
HE! HE
PLANNED
IT!



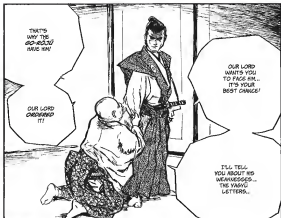
P-PLEASE,
SIR!

YOU COMING...
THIS MUST BE
FATE, ~~ANWAYS~~
RIGHT??

I DON'T
KNOW HOW
YOU GOT
HERE, BUT...

... YOU
CAN LIVE!
THE SAME
WAY!





THAT'S...
RIGHT. HEH...
FORGOT ABOUT
THAT.



Y-YES!
I DID THAT?
BUT THERE'S
MORE!



ALL
KINDS OF
DISEASES.
I HAVE
IT ALL!



AND IT'S
ALL YOURS!
JUST...
HELP ME!

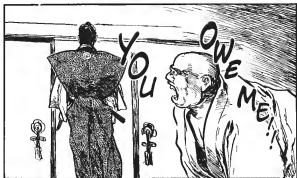
MY
APOLOGIES



THE
PALACE
IS COMING...
ANY
MINUTE!







I... I NEVER TOLD
OUR LORD THAT YOU
WERE IN EDO! THE HATCAO
STRAID... I BOUGHT
YOU TIME!











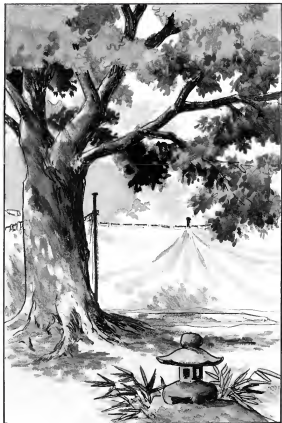


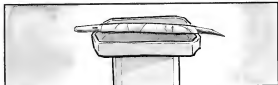


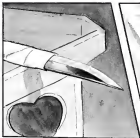
*the hundred and
thirty-second*

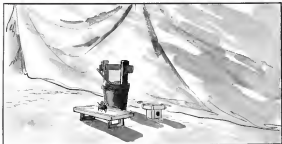
**Scarlet
Summer,
Silver
Fall**

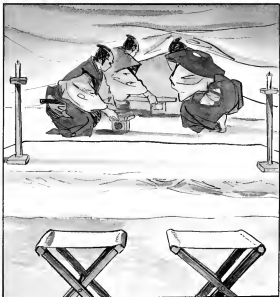
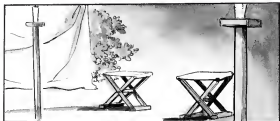


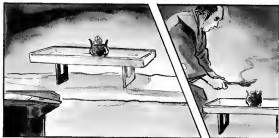


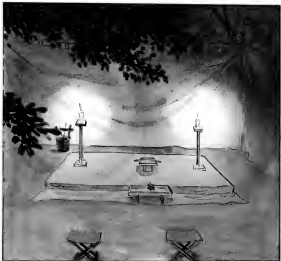




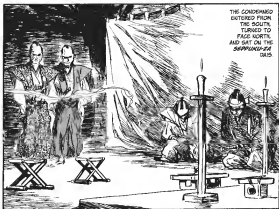












THE CONDEMNED
ENTERED FROM
THE SOUTH,
TURNED TO
FACE NORTH,
AND SAT ON THE
SHIMONAKA Dais



THE RITE
WAS USUALLY
PERFORMED
BETWEEN DARK
AND DARK.











HEAR
OUR LORD'S
WILL!

ABE TANOSHI,
HEAD OF THE
SERVERS
AND POISON
TASTERS OF
EDO CASTLE!

















PITIFUL,
INDEED



I'LL
BE YOUR
SECOND



NOW...
PREPARE
YOURSELF!

RRR

AAH!



PREPARE
YOURSELF,
AND DONCH!

FIRST,
BOW TO THE
ARABASHIMASSI.
THEN OPEN
YOUR ROBE,
RIGHT TO LEFT.



OR, IF
YOU PREFER,
SIMPLY SPREAD
THEM APART



PULL THE
TRAY CLOSER, AND
TAKE THE SHOPPING-TO
IN YOUR LEFT HAND. PLACE
YOUR RIGHT HAND UNDER
IT, AND RAISE IT TO
EYE-LEVEL.

TRANSFER THE
SWORD TO YOUR
RIGHT HAND. STROKE
ABOVE YOUR NAVEL
THREE TIMES WITH
YOUR LEFT.





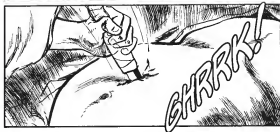














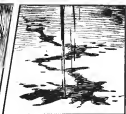








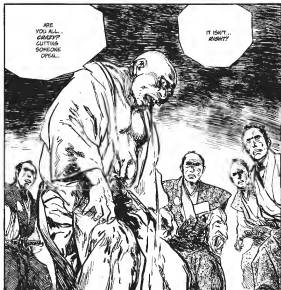






IT...
HURTS...

IT...
REALLY...
HURTS...



ARE
YOU ALL...
CRAPPY
GUTTING
SOMEONE
OPEN...

IT ISN'T...
RIGHT?











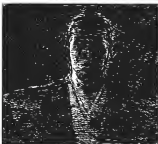
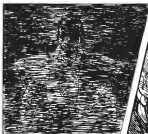








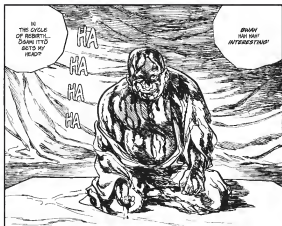














RETSUGO
SCREAMED,
ITTO CHOPS.

RIGHT
SUMMER'S
OVER... YOU'RE
NEXT. AUTUMN...
THEN WINTER.

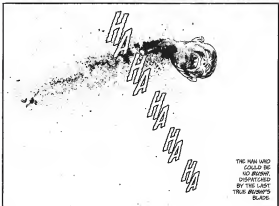


AT LAST,
ASA-NO-NARI
FELT NO
FEAR.

HE WHO COULD NEVER BE
A BOSS! AND BUTCHERED
THREE ARMED MEN! WITH
HIS OWN HANDS. HE FELT
A PROFOUND SATISFACTION,
WORKING ON JOY. SCARLET
SUMMER... SILVER FALL...
BLACK WINTER. THERE HE
WAS—RANKED ALONGSIDE
ITTO AND RETSUGO.

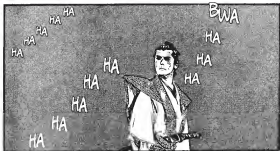
BOUGH
BOUGH

FOR HIS
SECOND,
SAMU RITO...
AND
ADAMANTISSIMO.



THE MAN WHO
COULD BE
SO BENE.
DISPATCHED
BY THE LAST
TRUE ADAMANT
BLADE.





LONG WOLF AND BIG BROTHER TWENTY-SIX: THE END
TO BE CONTINUED

GLOSSARY

ashigara

A lightly armed foot soldier, one of the lowest ranks of the samurai caste.

bugyo

A position combining the post of mayor and chief of police for a town, in charge of administration, maintaining the peace, and enforcing the law. *Bugyo* was extended only to commoners.

buke

Samurai families.

bushi

A samurai. A member of the warrior class.

enishi

A fateful, chance connection between two people.

fudasashi

Merchant houses specializing in rice. They loaned gold to *daimyo* governments, loans secured by the *daimyo*'s projected rice revenues.

han

A feudal domain.

honmaru

The central keep in Edo Castle, the living quarters of the shōgun.

honorifics

Japan is a class and status society, and proper forms of address are critical. Common markers of respect are the prefixes *o* and *go*, and a wide range of suffixes. Some of the suffixes you will encounter in *Love Wolf and Cab-done*—archaic, used for higher-ranked or highly respected figures.

saw—the most common, used among equals or near-equals.

sama—used for superiors.

sensei—used for teachers, masters, respected entertainers, and politicians.

ibai

A Buddhist mortuary tablet. The death name of the deceased, given after they die, is written on the tablet, which is kept at the family temple.

karō

Elders, usually the senior advisor to the *daimyō*, the lord of a *han*. Since the *daimyō* was required to alternate each year between life in his castle in the *han* and his residence in Edo, there was usually an *Edo-karō* (Edo elder) and a *han-karō* (*han* elder), who would administer affairs in Edo or in the *han* when their lord was away.

kanshiyaku

Official who administers *seppuku* and executions.

kikatsugan/sukatsugan

Secretive pellets of sustenance created by and for *majo*.

kōgi kaishakunin

The shōgun's own second, who performed executions ordered by the shōgun.

koku

A bale of rice. The traditional measure of a *han*'s wealth, a measure of its agricultural land and productivity.

kuchiyaku

Kuchiyaku were the tasters for the shōgun family. They were called *kuchiyaku*, or "official mouths," because they checked for poison with their own tongues.

kusa

Grass. In this case, the term refers to the secret *saijū* living normal lives and serving as spies in towns across Japan, throwing as grass in a field. They serve Yagyū Betsumō and send reports back to Edo.

machi-bugyō

The Edo city commissioner, combining the post of mayor and chief of police. A post held in monthly rotation by two senior Tokugawa vassals, in charge of administration, maintaining the peace, and enforcing the law in Edo. Their rule extended only to commoners; samurai in Edo were controlled by their own *daimeyō* and his officers.

machi-deshiyori

The town consul. The *machi-deshiyori* presided over official proclamations to the local headmen and merchants of individual wards in castle towns and in commercial areas.

monshō

Family crest.

namu

From the Sanskrit *namah*: "take refuge in the Buddha." A common prayer for the dead.

noshirae

A samurai's ceremonial robes.

ōjū

Inner circle of councillors directly advising the shōgun.

rōnin

A masterless samurai. Literally, "one adrift on the waves." Members of the samurai caste who have lost their masters through the dissolution of *han*, expulsion for misbehavior, or other reasons.

ryū

Often translated as "school." The many variations of swordsmanship and other martial arts were passed down from generation to generation to the offspring of the originator of the technique or set of techniques, and to any *arishi* students that sought to learn from the master. The largest schools had their own *dōjō* training centers and scores of students. An effective swordsman had to study the different techniques of the various schools to know how to block them in combat.

ryōei

The shōgun and his family.

seppuku

The right to kill oneself with honor to atone for failure, or to follow one's master into death. Only the samurai class was allowed this glorious but excruciating death. The abdomen was cut horizontally followed by an upward cut to spill out the intestines. When possible, a *katahikari* performed a beheading after the cut was made to shorten the agony.

seppuku-tō

Short sword used for *seppuku*.

shihai

Master.

shinan

Chief instructor.

wakadoshiyori

Junior councillors. The Tokugawa shōgunate was a hybrid government, both a national government empowered by the emperor to govern the nation as a whole, and a *daimeyō* government like that of any *han*, concerned with protecting the interests of the Tokugawa clan itself. The council of *wakadoshiyori* (junior councillors) was the highest advisory body to the shōgun on matters affecting the clan, rather than the nation as a whole.

KAZUO KOIKE

Though widely respected as a powerful writer of graphic fiction, Kazuo Koike has spent a lifetime reaching beyond the bounds of the comics medium. Aside from co-creating and writing the successful *Love Wolf and Cub* and *Crying Freeman* manga, Koike has hosted television programs; founded a golf magazine; produced movies; written popular fiction, poetry, and screenplays; and mentored some of Japan's best manga talents.

Love Wolf and Cub was first serialized in Japan in 1970 (under the title *Kazure Okami*) in *Manga Action* magazine and continued its hugely popular run for many years, being collected as the stories were published, and reprinted worldwide. Koike collected numerous awards for his work on the series throughout the next decade. Starting in 1972, Koike adapted the popular manga into a series of six films, the *Baby Cart Anime* saga, garnering widespread commercial success and critical acclaim for his screenwriting.

This wasn't Koike's only foray into film and video. In 1996, *Crying Freeman*, the manga Koike created with artist Ryōichi Ikegami, was

produced in Hollywood and released to commercial success in Europe and is currently awaiting release in America.

And to give something back to the medium that gave him so much, Koike started the *Gekiga Senjuku*, a college course aimed at helping talented writers and artists — such as *Battle 1/2* creator Ranjiko Takahashi — break into the comics field.

The driving focus of Koike's narrative is character development, and his commitment to character is clear: "Comics are carried by characters. If a character is well created, the comic becomes a hit." Kazuo Koike's continued success in comics and literature has proven this philosophy true.



GOSEKI KOJIMA

Goseki Kojima was born on November 3, 1928, the very same day as the godfather of Japanese comics, Osamu Tezuka. While just out of junior high school, the self-taught Kojima began painting advertising posters for movie theaters to pay his bills.

In 1950, Kojima moved to Tokyo, where the postwar devastation had given rise to special manga forms for audiences too poor to buy the new manga magazines. Kojima created art for *kami-shibubai*, or “paper-play” narrators, who would use manga story sheets to present narrated street plays. Kojima moved on to creating works for the *kashi-hon* market, bookstores that rented out books, magazines, and manga to mostly low-income readers. He soon became highly popular among *kashi-hon* readers.

In 1967, Kojima broke into the magazine market with his series *Dogshi*. As the manga magazine market grew and diversified, he turned out a steady stream of popular series.

In 1970, in collaboration with Kazuo Koike, Kojima began the work that would seal his reputation, *Seowu*

Okami (*Last Wolf and Cub*). Before long the story had become a gigantic hit, eventually spinning off a television series, six motion pictures, and even theme song records. Koike and Kojima were soon dubbed the “golden duo” and produced success after success on their way to the pinnacle of the manga world.

When *Manga Japan* magazine was launched in 1994, Kojima was asked to serve as consultant, and he helped train the next generation of manga artists.

In his final years, Kojima turned to creating original graphic novels based on the movies of his favorite director, Akira Kurosawa. Kojima passed away on January 5, 2000 at the age of 71.



THE RONIN REPORT

By Tim Ervin-Gore

Symbolism and meaning in *Lone Wolf and Cub*

A reader would have a hard time plowing through the 8300 or so pages of *Lone Wolf and Cub* without gathering some extra meaning and subtext from the story. For the American reader, it might not be so obvious. It's hard to cram the situation of the obsolete samurai seamlessly into a Western perspective. In the end, though skill is the basis for expressing *bushido*, it is the spirit that remains alive in society, while the steel blade and social structure drift away.

It becomes somewhat obvious, the effect Ito Ogami has on samurai society: he's cutting it down, destroying it, the very society he was once part of. In one way, it's saddening, and Ogami even sheds a few tears seeing that which he respects go down in so many pools and splatters of blood; but in another way of seeing things, it was one ultimate goal amongst samurai to be the very best at the way of the sword, some going so far as to challenge everyone with an unmatched reputation on a path that could be considered obsessive. Ito Ogami challenges the best swords in all of Japan for four years straight, and beats every one, all the way up to the top of the ladder. From the very first story, "Son for Hire, Sword for Hire," when Ogami assassinates a *han* lord using tactics unused for years in a post-war society: through the defeat of the *Bentōrai* brothers, who respected Ogami's sword work even in death; in every honorable samurai cut down in Ogami's path: Shimo Sakon, Yagyū Gunbei, Yamada Asaemon, Ishine Ozuno of the Kurokuwa, the former Makabe Shōgen, and so forth, Ogami is testing modern *bushido*. In this way, he's filtering out the impurities. But it's not simply prowess with the sword that works as a filter.

Those characters who watch the ways of Ito and Daigoro, those who recognize true *bushido* often remark how rare it is, as if it's been decades since one has seen such honor and dignity. It happens

throughout the series. In these cues one understands that the samurai society is no longer what it used to be. Of course, this becomes obvious as the series progresses. Back in Volume 3, when Torizō of the *bohachi* brothels tortures Ogami, who is protecting a young girl, she marvels that “there are so few of them left,” referring to the samurai. The priest in “The Gateless Barrier” (Vol. 2) even notices Ogami’s perfection in *bushido* when he’s already been sliced in half! And of course, that’s not the only priest who notices Ogami’s form and honor. In this very volume we see a monk remark of the rarity of true samurai, asking “the scent of a *bushi*...when did I smell it last?” And the sentiment is echoed by just about every slice of life as we pull in to the end of this epic series.

In searching for subtext and deeper meaning in *Lone Wolf and Cub*, it’s easy to draw a few simple lines in an attempt to understand the author’s intentions. One could assume that Yagyū Betsudō is the face of modern business: ruthless, talented, and sly, but corrupt with power. But where does Ogami fit in the equation? Is he representative of bygone innocence? Given his experience in war, it’s likely that innocence is not the subject. And then there’s Daigoro’s *shishogan* eyes, in which the innocence of a child is combined with the soul of someone who has seen more death than is imaginable. These elements suggest that maybe innocence is beside the point, that it’s honor itself, and discipline that has withered on the vine, or been plucked and thrown away altogether. But how does this transfer to everyday society? How does the moral of this tale translate to the West? What elements do we see in people that remind us of a time forgotten, and ever more rare, which of these elements make us proud of our past? It’s certainly not a simple warrior spirit that drives Ogami. Tactics and intelligence don’t quite cover it, because confidence and culture seem to be just as important. It’s possible that *Lone Wolf and Cub* is an emotional yet hearty push toward democracy, away from the archaic systems. Or maybe Koike and Kojima are trying to tell us that humanity has been in decline for quite some time. Despite our new age of international community and modern ways, one thing remains obvious when reading *Lone Wolf and Cub*, we’ve got a lot to learn from our past.



The Yagyu “grass,” spies planted for years in local citizenry, are on the move, gathering in Edo for a final battle. A ronin assassin known as Lone Wolf, Ito Ogi, has walked a path of demons with his little “wolf cub” Daigoro at his side, on a quest of vengeance and death (that’s shaking the very foundations of the samurai caste and the shogunate. No one has been able to stop him, not even the crafty, contemptible poisoner, Abeno Kagi. But before Ito and Yagyu can finally battle to the death, some unfinished business must commence. It looks like the poisoner is about see his final day, but he won’t go out without a battle of wits. It’s spring, a time of festivities, but also a time of death, no stranger to Lone Wolf and Cub.

“This is a comic that reached massive culture-spanning status in Japan, and has influenced some of the West’s most important comics creators, such as Frank Miller.”

— *Lindsay Duff*
www.bbc.com

Published for the first time in America in the Japanese format.



子連れ狼

Front cover artwork by
MATT WAGNER